

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

## PLEASE JOIN US IN THE FIGHT TO KEEP SEMI-AUTOMATIC ASSAULT WEAPONS OUT OF THE HANDS OF DANGEROUS CRIMINALS

March 10, 2003

Dear Colleague:

Please join us as an original cosponsor of the "Assault Weapons Ban and Law Enforcement Protection Act of 2003", legislation designed to renew and strengthen the current assault weapons ban set to expire later this Congress.

The current assault weapons ban is supported by virtually every federal, state and local law enforcement agency across the land. Since its introduction in 1994, the ban has increased public safety and prevented dangerous weapons from falling into the hands of violent criminals, including gang members and terrorists.

Assault weapons possess unique, military-bred, anti-personnel design characteristics. These features, taken together, make it easy for a shooter to simply point—as opposed to carefully aiming—the weapon to quickly target a relatively wide area with a lethal spray of bullets. This makes assault weapons especially attractive to criminals and distinguishes them from true hunting weapons.

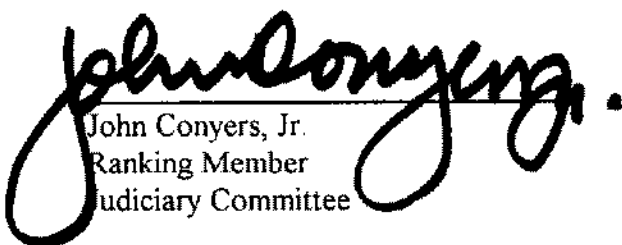
Unfortunately, even with its many successes, would-be criminals have demonstrated the ban's limitations. These include: a gun manufacturer's ability to slightly modify an assault weapon so as to evade the ban's coverage; the sale of 'parts kits' which permit criminals to assemble unlawful assault weapons; and various reports indicating the continued use of these weapons in the senseless killing of local law enforcement personnel. For example, the 2003 slaying of two Louisiana police officers by a gunman armed with an AK-47-type assault rifle; the 2001 killing of a 25-year veteran San Antonio police officer by a gunman armed with a MAC-10 semi-automatic assault pistol; and the 2001 brutal slaying of a Detroit police officer by a gunman armed with an AK-47 assault rifle. An additional example is the usage of the Bushmaster XM-15 assault rifle in last year's Washington, DC-area sniper shootings in which 10 people were killed and three others seriously wounded. Bushmaster markets its assault rifle as a "Post-Ban" weapon and is one of the many assault weapon manufacturers who have successfully evaded the 1994 law.

Additional steps must be taken to address these types of problems, and our bill provides an appropriate solution. It begins by improving upon the current definition of a semi-automatic assault weapon to include any semi-automatic weapon that accepts a detachable ammunition magazine and possesses, a single, narrowly defined, assault weapon characteristic. Furthermore, it contains a provision that makes it more difficult for individuals to purchase or sell parts that make it possible to convert a lawful semi-automatic weapon into an unlawful assault weapon. Finally, it incorporates increased controls over the possession and transfer of lawfully possessed assault weapons.

During the 2000 election cycle, then-Governor Bush made a campaign promise to support the extension of the ban, as did Attorney General Ashcroft during his 2001 Senate confirmation hearing. We are glad to hear of their support. We can think of no legitimate reason for civilians to have access to military-style weapons that are useless for recreational purposes and only serve the purpose of furthering unwanted criminal activity.

If you would like to become an original cosponsor of this important piece of legislation or need additional information, please contact Greg Barnes of the House Judiciary Committee staff at 5-2022 or Chris Rosello in Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy's office at 5-5516.

Sincerely,

  
John Conyers, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Judiciary Committee

  
Carolyn McCarthy  
Member of Congress